



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



AIR FORCE LT. GEN. STANLEY CLARKE ASSUMES DUTIES AS AIR GUARD DIRECTOR

Air Force Lt. Gen. Stanley E. Clarke III assumed the duties and responsibilities of director, Air National Guard in a ceremony last week at the Air National Guard Readiness Center. Clarke took over as director from Air Force Lt. Gen. Harry "Bud" Wyatt, who retired.

A command pilot with more than 4,000 hours—including more than 100 combat hours—in the A-10 Thunderbolt II and F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft, Clarke assumed his current position after serving as commander of 1st Air Force and Continental U.S. North America Aerospace Defense Command.

"There's a lot to learn," said Clarke. "But, I've hit the ground running and am drinking from the fire hose. I have already been on the hill seven times and testified twice." However, he said his new role is a humbling one. "This is quite an honor and I am humbled at the opportunity to serve (those in the Air Guard)," said Clarke.

And, as Clarke takes the reins as director, he said he sees tremendous opportunities despite recent budget cutbacks. "I've arrived in a time of budget turmoil and uncertainty, but I view this as a time of opportunity as well," he said, adding that his focus and commitment is clear.

"My commitment to the (Airmen) and the adjutants general is clear," he said. "We will do everything within our authority to ensure our Airmen have clear policies, equipment, training, and resources to accomplish assigned missions. We remain community based, team oriented, and experienced."



Air Force Lt. Gen. Stanley Clarke III, right, the director of the Air National Guard, receives the organizational colors of the Air National Guard from Army Gen. Frank Grass, chief, National Guard Bureau, during a ceremony at the Air National Guard Readiness Center at Joint Base Andrews, Md., where Clarke assumed the responsibilities of his current position, Friday, March 22, 2013. Clarke takes over the duties of director from Air Force Lt. Gen. Harry "Bud" Wyatt, who retired.

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DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO HOST THREE SPRING MINI CONFERENCES

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will host their annual spring mini-conferences May 21-23, 2013, at the following locations.

May 21—Sturgis - Veterans Club, 868 Main Street

May 22—Pierre - American Legion, 520 S. Pierre Street

May 23—Brookings – City/County Building, 520 3rd Street

Please feel free to attend whichever session works best for you.

Staff is in the process of finalizing the agenda and if you have particular topic(s) you would like to have covered, please feel free to contact Larry Person (605-773-4982) with your suggestion or request. Some topics we have been asked to cover are the 10 and 20-year protection rules, confirmed & continued ratings and Un-employability (IU) ratings.

As in the past, the training sessions are scheduled to run from 10:00AM to 3:00PM.



BOWEN TAKES THE PLUNGE

As temperatures dropped to 23 degrees, Kevin Bowen, field officer for the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, was one of 19 brave souls that took the plunge on Sunday.

This was Bowen's sixth year of taking the "polar plunge" in an effort to raise money for the Special Olympics of South Dakota. Collectively, the 19 jumpers raised \$4,000. Monies raised in Pierre will be split between Oahe Inc and the Special Olympics South Dakota state office.

As Bowen plunged into the chilling waters, with pipe and all, he was heard chanting, "I'm strong to the finish when I eat my spinach, I'm Popeye the sailor man! Toot, toot!"

"I yam what I yam, and that's all what I yam."



BOWEN ATTENDS VFW FORUM

Kevin Bowen, field officer for the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, participated in the VFW Veterans Forum, Monday, March 18, 2013, in Wagner, SD.

This Q & A session was a great opportunity for veterans to ask questions regarding their benefits. Most of the forum focused on Agent Orange Presumptive Conditions, VA healthcare, and how to increase their benefits.

County Veterans Service Officers Richard Beringer (Bon Homme County) and Fred Kuil (Douglas County) were also in attendance and available to assist veterans with their respective issues.

Representatives from Vietnam Veterans of America were present and encouraged veterans to start a local chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America.



ZIEBACH NAMES NEW CVSO

Ziebach County has hired Harold "Pete" Veit as their new County Veterans Service Officer. Pete's hours are 8:00 am—5:00 pm on Mondays. The office phone number for the Ziebach County Veterans Service Officer is 605-365-5157.

Pete served in the United States Army from 1979-1983 and currently serves as the commander of the American Legion in Dupree.

The Department welcomes "Pete" to the veteran network and looks forward to assisting him and his veterans.



OPEN HOUSE FOR OPERATION BLACK HILLS CABIN

Mark your calendars — Operation Black Hills Cabin will be having their open house on Thursday, April 18, from 1:00—3:00 pm (MT). The cabin is located at 385 Dakota Lane in Custer. Secretary Zimmerman will be one of the keynote speakers and will partake in the ribbon cutting.

The concept behind the cabin is to offer a week's vacation to qualifying wounded veterans and their families, from the Iraq/Afghanistan campaign.

For more information about Operation Black Hills Cabin, visit: <http://www.operationblackhillscabin.org/>.



ESGR ANNOUNCES SOUTH DAKOTA'S NOMINATIONS FOR 2013 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE EMPLOYER SUPPORT FREEDOM AWARD

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense operational committee, announced 19 South Dakota Guard and Reserve members nominated their employers for the 2013 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. The agency received 2,899 nominations nationwide. The Freedom Award is the Department of Defense's highest recognition for employers supporting employees serving in the Guard and Reserve. Up to 15 award recipients will be announced this summer and honored in Washington, D.C. later this year at the 18th annual Freedom Award ceremony. Past award recipients have met with senior leaders of the White House and Department of Defense as part of the award recognition.

Guard and Reserve Service members, or family members acting on their behalf, nominated their civilian employers for the Freedom Award during the 12-week nomination season that closed in January. Even with recent draw downs in Afghanistan, ongoing national security demands and historic humanitarian relief missions have continued to call service members away from their civilian lives. Supportive employers are critical to helping restore stability and peace of mind for these Citizen Warriors and their loved ones.

"Every year, these nominations demonstrate the strength of our employers' commitment to supporting our Guardsmen and Reservists," said ESGR National Chair James G. Rebholz. "We applaud all the National Guard and Reserve Service members who took the time to tell the DoD why their employers are exceptional, and we are grateful to the 2013 nominees for providing our Citizen Warriors with the assistance and encouragement they rely on while answering the call to duty."

Nearly one-half of the U.S. military is comprised of Guard and Reserve members. While most Guard and Reserve employers proudly support their military employees, Freedom Award recipients are recognized for going to extraordinary lengths for their Guardsmen and Reservists. Nationwide, this year's nominees represent diverse industries including airlines, grocery store chains, national retail brands and IT companies, as well as small businesses, and state and local governments.

A list of nominations from all 50 states, Guam-CNMI, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia are available at www.FreedomAward.mil. Semifinalists for the 2013 Freedom Award will be announced later this spring.

2013 Freedom Award nominations from South Dakota are: Daktronics (Brookings), Leadership Foundry (Dell Rapids), City of Harrisburg, Vern Eide Ford (Mitchell), Black Hills Corporation (Rapid City), Black Hills Orthopedics and Spine Center (Rapid City), Pennington County Sheriff's Office (Rapid City), Rapid City Police Department, RCAS Knollwood Elementary (Rapid City), Bartels Counseling Services, Inc. (Sioux Falls), GunUp, Inc. (Sioux Falls), Lewis Drug Stores (Sioux Falls), Rave, Industries (Sioux Falls), Sioux Falls Police Department, Woods, Fuller, Schultz & Smith P.C. (Sioux Falls), Dave Hahler Automotive (Webster), State of South Dakota Human Services Center (Yankton), and Yankton Federal Prison Camp.



SECRETARY ZIMMERMAN TRAVELING THE STATE

Secretary Zimmerman embarks on his journey to meet all of South Dakota's County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers.

By the close of this week he will have been in the offices of the following counties: Beadle, Brown, Codrington, Corson, Custer, Day, Fall River, Grant, Hand, Hyde, Lawrence, Marshall, Meade, Pennington, Perkins, Potter, Roberts, Sanborn, Spink, and Walworth.

These visits are providing the Secretary with a first-hand look at the role of the VSO, as well as an opportunity to visit about the services provided by the Department. Zimmerman said, "although the days have been long, the positives of this journey far outweigh the travel. Being able to see first-hand, the interaction between the VSO and their veterans is both educational and rewarding."



THANK YOU AND WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS

During the 2013 legislative session, legislation was passed declaring March 30 as a working holiday to honor and "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans." Although this legislation does not become law until July 1, we believe this is a great opportunity for all of you to educate your local media, as well as encourage your community leaders to make plans to commemorate this day next year and continue as an annual event.

As a Vietnam Era Veteran with over 31 years of service, Larry Zimmerman, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, would personally like to say "Welcome Home and Thank You." "These men and women served honorably and bravely in Vietnam," said Zimmerman. "Unfortunately, they arrived home to a country in turmoil and never received the recognition they deserved. By setting March 30th aside, we can show our unified gratitude for their service and sacrifice."



SB 83 - An Act to designate Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day as a working holiday. That chapter 1-5 be amended by adding thereto a NEW SECTION to read as follows:

The thirtieth day of March, to be known as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day, shall be observed in this state as a working holiday. Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day is dedicated to the remembrance and recognition of the service and sacrifice rendered by our nation's veterans of the Vietnam War.

Upcoming Events

Apr. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am
Apr. 11—Yankton Career Fair—Regional Technical Education Center—1:00-6:00 pm
Apr. 10—SD Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:30 am
Apr. 12—Purple Up
Apr. 18—Operation Black Hills Cabin Open House—Custer 1:00 pm
Apr. 19-21—VABHHCS Women Veterans Retreat—Ft. Meade VA Medical Center
May 3-5—DAV State Convention—The Lodge—Deadwood
May 11—Yellow Ribbon for the 935th—Rapid City
May 19—Yellow Ribbon for the 927th—Sioux Falls
May 21—SDDVA Spring Mini Conference—Sturgis Veterans Club (868 Main Street) - 10:00 am
May 22—SDDVA Spring Mini Conference—Pierre American Legion (520 S. Pierre Street) - 10:00 am
May 23—SDDVA Spring Mini Conference—Brookings City/County Bldg (520 3rd Street) - 10:00 am
Jun. 6-9—American Legion State Convention—Ramkota Hotel/Conference Center—Rapid City
Jul. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am
Jul. 26—Korean War Commemoration Display—SDNG Museum—Pierre
Jul. 27 Korean War Wreath Laying Ceremony at the SD State Capitol—Pierre
Aug. 24-25—Freedom Bird 2013—W. H. Lyon Fairgrounds—Sioux Falls 10:00 am—5:00 pm
Oct. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am
Dec. 15—Wreaths Across America Ceremony—Black Hills National Cemetery—10:00 am



Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
South Dakota Department of the Military
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
Soldiers and Sailors Building
425 E Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-8242
E-mail address: audry.ricketts@state.sd.us
Web site: <http://mva.sd.gov>

